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# Peter Kutulakis Remembered

Ellen Wayne\*

Peter has been a part of my life for over twenty years. We shared common interests both professionally and personally, and I will miss his warmth and his caring attitude toward everyone that he touched. Peter's professional life intersected my world through many avenues including the following legal organizations:

## National Association for Law Placement ("NALP")

Peter served as NALP President from 1978-1979. However, his participation in the organization went much further than just holding its highest office. He was, as was usual for Peter, deeply involved in formulating the direction of the organization. His participation included a stint as Treasurer (before the days of computerized accounting systems) and chairing many of the organization's committees and task forces. As President, he implemented his ideas for a hands-on conference including many opportunities for the sharing of ideas—always around the concept of assisting students. I heard Peter speak many times, and I often served as the first audience for many of his presentations. That year we began a routine that lasted until his death—practicing our panel presentations on each other for editorial comment, to better focus our remarks, and, later, for cheerleading and encouragement.

After his presidency ended, Peter began to seek other avenues for his limitless energy and enthusiasm and for his steady drive to keep student and client service at the front of the profession's agenda. He did some law school consulting and was always available to assist colleagues in career services offices with their problems and with the establishment of new programs. He loved to visit law schools to see clinic offices and to share experiences with other administrators, but he began to want to do more than just visit.

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\* Assistant Dean and Director of Career Services at Columbia Law School in New York City.

## Publications

Our next shared endeavor moved into the publications arena. I had attended a round-table of attorneys discussing training and supervision of recent graduates, and I asked Peter to co-author an article on the subject.<sup>1</sup> We met at my law school in Boston, and, as Peter sat at the computer, I realized that he had not a clue as to how to operate the equipment. After a one hour training session during which he refused to relinquish the keyboard, I saw how directed he could be when he decided to learn something new. From then on, every time we collaborated on a written piece, the drafting of the article or concept included a computer lesson (Peter did get better at his typing), and all of our work was painstakingly typed by him (even though it took twice the time to complete). His joy at being able to succeed at using the keyboard as we drafted was so infectious that it more than compensated for the extra time spent on the project. We published that paper in the ALI/ABA training manual, and it was used for many years as part of their training program for new attorneys. The last written piece on which we both worked was a proposal for a Professional Development Workshop on Serving International Students that we submitted to the Association of American Law Schools in 1997. It was tabled until there was an increase in interest among faculty and administrative groups, and we had planned to re-submit it this fall. I will most likely do so although planning a program will not be the same without Peter's input and creative energy.

## Association of American Law Schools ("AALS")

AALS meetings had always been of concern to Peter. He went to his professional meetings with the clinical faculty and then ended up spending time with the few other administrators who attended the annual meeting. We discussed many times the need to (a) do something to provide a home for the administrative staff who attended, and (b) supplement NALP's recruitment oriented focus. As I completed my term as NALP treasurer, I called Peter and reminded him of his promise to do something for administrators whose prime responsibility was to work with students. His job

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1. See Ellen Wayne & Peter N. Kutulakis, *Associate Training and Feedback, Developing a Successful In-House Training Program for Your Lawyers*, ALI-ABA, The American Institute, 34 CLE Journal, Number 3, 253-60 (1989).

responsibilities had changed, and he was now spending a great deal of his time counseling students as well as teaching courses in negotiation and family law. We called the Executive Director of the AALS and obtained the policies and procedures for establishing a new section within the organization. Peter drafted the first set of bylaws, and we called some of our colleagues. In the fall of 1991, we met in New York with the Directors of career services offices from Georgetown and NYU and held our first organizational planning meeting. We decided to name the section the Student Service Section, and Peter and I agreed to sit in the lobby of the hotel at the next annual meeting to collect the necessary signatures on a petition requesting section status for a group of law school senior administrators—mostly Deans of Students and Career Services. We obtained the necessary signatures, met with the Executive Director of the AALS, and presented our by-laws and other paperwork. The Director agreed to submit our materials to the Executive Board, and we were allowed to hold our initial program. Peter agreed to serve as the Section's first Chair, and we had no idea of the number of our colleagues who might come to discuss the establishment and direction of this new section. We had over 50 people in the audience when Peter approached the platform. He explained that this Section would address issues relative to the counseling and administrative services that we, as senior staff, provided to students. Many of the Association's other sections were directed toward the updating and sharing of information about fields of legal study and curriculum concerns, but no other group was focused on the needs of the students at our respective schools. When Peter ended his speech to enthusiastic applause, he was the most excited that I had ever seen him. This meeting had accomplished something to which Peter had dedicated his professional life—making the educational and administrative process better for students and then convincing his colleagues to join him on this journey into the unknown realm of law school faculty activities.

Peter was involved in the planning of every program and workshop of the Section from that time forward. He agreed to serve as the third Chair of the Section when, at the last moment, the Chair-Elect could not serve. He is the only Chair to have held that office twice. One of the last breakfast meetings I had with Peter was a planning session for the Section's annual meeting this past January. He was, as usual, brimming with ideas and had

already asked Dickinson's Dean Peter Glenn to participate on the Dean's panel planned for the morning plenary session. Sadly, the meeting was held this January without Peter. It did not feel right without Peter adding his commentary and providing a post-meeting analysis of what worked and what did not. A strong voice was missing. However, there are now over five hundred members of this Section (one of the largest at the AALS), and the programs will go on with a focus on the services provided to students, all as Peter had planned. It is a fine legacy to his strong desire to continue to improve his skills and knowledge in helping students see law school as having a more human face.

In addition to his interest in serving students, the next two most important professional issues for Peter were his desire to be a better lawyer in terms of his ability to assist clients and his drive to make the profession more ethical in its approach to law practice in the community.

#### American Bar Association ("ABA")

Peter took an active role at the ABA and served on many committees through the years. He asked me to Co-Chair, with him, the General Practice Section's Committee on Professional Competence and Liability. We produced quarterly newsletters and yearly programs for each of the two years of our joint service. The newsletters were always packed with information on ethical issues relative to client services, and he was constantly scanning the legal press for items of interest to members of the committee as well as topics that might prove to be good for programs at the annual meeting. One of the topics we kept coming back to was the role of stress on attorneys when things went wrong in their practice. Peter spoke often about stress reduction and professional lifestyle/balance.

One of the speeches I most remember was one in which he took a group of about eighty solo and small practitioners through a series of stress reduction exercises. We had not advertised the exercise as part of the description of the program, and we worried about how it would be received by the audience. At the end of his prepared remarks about stress in an attorney's work world, he roamed the dimly lighted room with a microphone, lowered his voice, and softly began leading people through the relaxation process. After fifteen minutes, I looked over the audience and saw people sitting with their eyes closed and their bodies relaxed. For

the first time, I realized how persuasive a speaker Peter was and how correct he had been about the use of counseling techniques and the receptivity of the audience. When Peter concluded the exercise and the lights were brightened, applause filled the room. The audience, in large numbers, came to the front of the room to ask him where they could get a copy of the exercise tape (created by the counseling staff of Gettysburg College) which Peter had kindly offered to anyone who asked. He told me later that he had sent out over two hundred tapes (people had told friends about the session and they had written to him requesting copies). I also began using the tape with stressed students and found that I was giving out about twenty copies a year—mostly during exam time.

During the past few years, Peter's energy was spent in the ABA's Law Practice Management Section's Task Force on the Law School Curriculum. He was working with other members of the Task Force to formulate a model curriculum that included practice skills in each of the three years of law school. He was also designing a program which would establish practice skills for Continuing Legal Education ("CLE") programs which could be provided nationwide to new practitioners whose law school education did not include a practice skills component. These programs would be directed toward new attorneys practicing in small or solo law firms.

The last panel program I attended with Peter occurred during the annual ABA meeting in San Francisco just days before he died. His reaction clearly indicated how his focus never changed. I had agreed to meet him at a program on risk management. Peter, as usual, had come to the program early and was sitting in the front row so that he might better hear the presentation. I waited for him at the back of the room, and when the program ended there was Peter, running up to see me, his face alive with his reaction to the speakers. When I asked him what he thought (knowing full well that I would hear his analysis whether I wanted to or not), he went into a full description of what was missing from the program—any mention of the client. When he calmed down long enough to listen, I suggested that he rectify the situation and draft a proposal for another program on this topic with the client central to the program for next year's annual meeting. He said that he would as soon as he got home, and as I was on the Education Board of the Law Practice Management Section, he expected my full support for the idea and asked if I had any suggestions for co-presenters. It is

still a good idea, and perhaps one year it will be done as Peter envisioned it.

### Personally

Many of my most memorable conversations with Peter took place over food, whether it was something that he had cooked himself or, more likely, in a restaurant. Peter was most comfortable at the table. We spent many an evening at a local restaurant in any city where a professional meeting was taking place going over our mutual presentations or just catching up on our lives. Peter knew and appreciated good food. On his many trips into New York City, I would get a call from him saying, "I just found this wonderful neighborhood restaurant, and you just have to meet me here so you can try the food." Peter was most comfortable in the kitchen preparing a Greek specialty and creating a sense of intimacy that was not possible in any other way. His shrimp with Feta cheese and tomato sauce was a classic shared with many friends. His stuffed grape leaves and moussaka were legendary, and he was the first to volunteer to bring food to an event or meeting.

Peter's love of music often led to some interesting experiences. He not only enjoyed singing and participated in many musical groups through the years, but he also liked to experience new musical events. One evening I got a call from Peter saying "Drop everything. There are only two tickets left for this evening's performance of the Amato Opera Company in the Bowery and you just have to come with me." It was later revealed that Peter had read an article about this small feeder opera company which provided experience for young singers before they were discovered by the larger and more well known opera world. The company was celebrating its fiftieth year of existence. When we reached the theater, I knew that we were in for a typically unique Peter experience. The ticket taker was dressed in stage make-up. The auditorium consisted of folding chairs in the basement, and the conductor had to walk through the audience to reach the orchestra pit. When I looked for our usher to ask for a program, I was unable to find her. She appeared moments later, when the curtain opened, singing in the chorus. The voices of the cast were wonderful, and the tenor had one of the best young voices I have ever heard. As usual, Peter had found something wonderful. He had discovered early on that some of the best experiences were

unexpected and appreciated only because you were willing to take a chance on something unusual.

I considered Peter, as many people did, to be one of my closest friends. We spoke about issues both professional or personal at least once each week. Many others felt the same warmth and caring. If you had something to talk over, he was the one to call for a discussion of the options or just a chance to vent your feelings with someone who listened.

But as close as Peter was to his friends and colleagues, his attachment and devotion to The Dickinson School of Law were well known. Peter was active in all aspects of the administration of the school's program. Every year I would see him sitting at a table at the New York City Admissions Forum telling prospective applicants about Dickinson. I would hear him for perhaps the twentieth time that day explaining to a geographically challenged New Yorker where Carlisle, Pennsylvania was located. At the end of the day, he would excitedly count the address cards he had collected during the day and say to everyone within hearing distance, "I had a great day—the best day ever." In every city where we had a conference or professional meeting scheduled, Peter would meet with alumni of the law school—people he considered not just former students but friends and partners in his professional endeavors. He held receptions, visited law offices, and assisted alumni with their hiring needs and career changes. For Peter, the merger with The Pennsylvania State University was a time of excitement and challenge. It was another wonderful change in the life of his law school. He was very concerned about the comfort level of the staff as all of the changes began, and he was in the process of working to establish a committee to open lines of communication explaining administrative changes to students.

The most important parts of Peter's life were saved for those private times that he spent on the farm and especially in his relationship with his son Jason. Not a conversation went by without his telling me something that Jason had done to make him proud. He was delighted when Jason decided to attend Dickinson to become a lawyer. As only Peter could, he spent many hours worrying about whether he was worrying too much and whether he was providing enough emotional support especially during that difficult first year of law school. Jason's graduation was a wonderful day for Peter.



I will miss Peter's voice at meetings and the unique way he had of sharing his advice. He always had an opinion about an educational issue and was ready to fight for the inclusion of students, clients, and ethics in all discussions about law school curriculum, administrative issues, and the legal profession. The legacy of his professional work will be found in the programs he ran, the organizations he established, and, most of all, in the people he helped throughout his life. The legal profession is a better place because Peter Kutulakis was there and participated in it. It is a much sadder one without him.